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Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR DAN SAINZ FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)
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¶11. (C) SUMMARY. Vladimir Putin's proposed spring visit to Warsaw has not yet been scheduled, but Polish officials tell us that energy security will likely top the agenda. Prime Minister Tusk's staff said the media accurately described Tusk's January 29 meeting with Putin in Davos as a discussion that focused mainly on oil and gas supplies. The broader bilateral relationship is too often "driven by newspapers, statements, and events," our Polish interlocutors complained; they called for "an equal partnership" based on clear rules within the framework of a new EU partnership agreement with Russia. Although Poland and Russia are reportedly close to concluding a long-sought agreement on navigation rights in the Vistula Gulf, the Poles are still generally skeptical that a boost in ties is in the offing. While Russia appears to be easing its resistance to EU initiatives like the Eastern Partnership, Polish officials fear that Moscow will increasingly seek external enemies to distract attention from Russia's deteriorating economic situation. END SUMMARY.

BUSINESS-LIKE MEETING IN DAVOS

¶12. (C) Prime Minister Tusk's meeting with Putin in Davos featured a "business-like" discussion focused mainly on oil and gas supplies, according to Małgorzata Urbaniak of the Prime Minister's Chancellery, who briefed Poloff February 6. At the beginning of the meeting, Tusk extended to Putin an invitation to visit Warsaw later this spring. The two leaders were later joined by the heads of Lukoil and PKN Orlen. In describing Putin, Urbaniak said, "we all know how he tends to behave," but Tusk "focused on the subject matter" instead of Putin's casual demeanor, which several media reports had characterized "as offending."

PUTIN VISIT: UNDETERMINED AGENDA, BUT SOME ISSUES EMERGE

¶13. (C) Urbaniak, as well as Kacper Wanczyk and Grzegorz Cyganowski of the MFA's Eastern Policy Department, told us there was no set date or agenda for Putin's planned trip to Warsaw. The MFA officials added that Deputy FM Andrzej Kremer was expected to fly to Moscow this week to nail down details of the visit. FM Radosław Sikorski will make a follow-up visit in March, according to the press. Maciej Jakubik, who handles Eastern policy issues at the Presidential Chancellery, told us it was a positive development that Putin who the press says last visited Warsaw in 2002--will come to Poland instead of "summoning us to Moscow." Jakubik suggested this was perhaps "a sign that some day we'll be treated as an equal partner." Although Eastern Policy is not always well coordinated within the executive branch, Jakubik noted President Kaczyński's support for Prime Minister Tusk's invitation to Putin, as well as FM Sikorski's Eastern Partnership initiative.

¶4. (C) Our interlocutors speculated that energy supplies would top the list of topics for the visit's agenda (Note: The two sides are currently negotiating a renewal of supply contracts set to expire December 31 as well as a contract to replace mediator RUE who was cut out of the recent Ukraine/Russia gas deal). The two leaders are also expected to discuss navigation rights on the Vistula Gulf, which is split between Poland and Russia's Kaliningrad region. Both sides are close to resolving this navigation issue, according to MFA officials, though they declined to speculate whether the Prime Ministers would be prepared to settle the issue finally during Putin's visit. In addition, the Polish side wants to talk about sensitive historical subjects like the Katyn massacre--an issue on which the Russian government's attitude has been "disappointing," according to Urbaniak. She also speculated that the Russians will continue to raise objections to the planned U.S. missile defense shield.

¶5. (SBU) Today's media painted a somewhat brighter picture than MFA officials of what the planned Putin visit would accomplish and declared "a warming with Moscow." The press indicated that the Prime Ministers are expected to sign an agreement on the Vistula Gulf and on additional Russian gas supplies. The press also implied that the two will discuss the possibility of Russia taking part in some projects within the framework of the EU's Eastern Partnership.

THE BROADER RELATIONSHIP: UNEQUAL PARTNERS

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¶6. (C) MFA officials expressed frustration that the bilateral relationship was "driven by newspapers, statements, and events" and advocated using the EU more effectively as a tool to "bring rules to the game" and equalize the bilateral relationship through negotiation of a new EU-Russia partnership agreement--a process that Poland had earlier opposed. They noted, however, that such an effort would face two major challenges: 1) Russian oligarchs and their political backers--who are protecting their own business interests, and 2) Moscow's proclivity to use external conflicts to distract its own population from Russia's deteriorating economic situation. The MFA also seeks to broaden the bilateral dialogue beyond the political elite through initiatives like scientific and cultural exchanges.

RUSSIA THAWS ON EASTERN PARTNERSHIP (MAYBE)

¶7. (C) MFA officials told us that when Sikorski first proposed the Eastern Partnership, Moscow perceived it as a challenge to Russia's traditional sphere of influence but was now "less negative" about the idea. Separately, Czech DCM Jan Tomasek told us that a mid-level Russian MFA official had raised the prospect of Russia joining the Eastern Partnership during a recent gathering of mid-level MFA officials representing the Visegrad countries. Tomasek, however, was skeptical about Russia's intent and noted the lack of follow-up from Moscow. He speculated that it might have been a half-baked effort to complicate implementation of the Partnership.

COMMENT

¶8. (C) It is unlikely that Putin's visit to Warsaw will erase Polish skepticism of Russia's motives towards its neighbors--particularly after Russia's invasion of Georgia, its disruptive gas conflict with Ukraine, and its threats to place Iskander missiles in Kaliningrad to "neutralize" the planned U.S. missile defense system in Poland. However, Putin's trip could be a step towards further improvements in

bilateral relations--particularly if the two countries sign agreements on energy and navigation rights on the Vistula Gulf.

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